

HARRY BRIDGES

In reply to a question asked by a reporter in Italy concerning the reasons for the expulsion of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union from the CIO, Bridges is quoted as saying: "It is not a matter of reasons," he answered, "but of pretexts. We of the West Coast have been expelled for 'Communism.' It is an accusation without foundation unless the fight for peace and for the international unity of the workers is a Communist fight. In reality we were not willing that the chiefs of the CIO-AFL dismantle in a 'de facto' manner the autonomy necessary to every type of labor union, enslaving us to a reactionary labor union policy, to a policy of breaking with the FSM and with the unions that adhere to it, and to a policy of support for certain American political forces that certainly do not act to the advantage of the workers. We were not willing and we cannot agree with such a policy because it does not correspond to the interests of the workers."

(Il Porto, publication of the Communist port workers union of Genoa, February, 1959)

Bridges is quoted in a Czech newspaper as saying: "Our visit to Czechoslovakia was unusually interesting for us and has brought us many impressions. Because the American workers are systematically influenced by the press and radio, which are unfriendly to your country, we shall explain many views to the members of our union. The visit to the Tos factory at Celakovice, for instance, has convinced us of the nonsensical propaganda about working conditions in your factories, about the concern for the workers, about the life of young people and about the function and position of the trade union organization. Having visited Britain, France, Belgium, Greece and Egypt, we have gained the impression that you are on the best road for achieving still greater results than before."

(Prace, Prague, February 8, 1959)

In an interview given by Bridges to the Soviet Labor Publication Trud he stated as follows:

"Visiting the Soviet Union is 'very worthwhile.' Harry Bridges, chairman of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, told newsmen here following a week's tour of the country. 'I want to say that the Soviet people urgently desire world peace. It would be very good if American trade unionists and the AFL-CIO would visit the Soviet Union. They would find out that everything told the working people in the U. S. about the U.S.S.R. is pure lying and slanderous propaganda. . . .'

"Bridges said they had studied the organizational structure of the Soviet trade union movement and its methods of electing leadership and found this to be democratic. In that connection they are more democratic than many American trade unions. . . .

"Bridges expressed the hope that Soviet workers would see their seven-year plan bringing them rich fruits, a more developed industry and a higher living standard. 'I want them to have an opportunity to fulfill their plan in conditions of peace, so that wars - cold or hot - will not interrupt them.'"

(TASS, Moscow, February 13, 1959)

A Czech publication printed a story stating that the West Coast longshoreman leader had published a laudatory account of what he had seen last month in Czechoslovakia. Bridges was quoted as saying in the union paper Disnat Cher that Czechoslovakia had no unemployment, in contrast to the United States, and that automatization merely freed much needed manpower here for other jobs whereas in America it put men on the street. The Czechoslovak living standard, he said, was rising, and he was going to tell the American unions about the achievements of the socialist system over here.

(Svobodne Slovo, Czechoslovakia, March 25, 1959)

Bridges, in addressing the Pacific and Asian Dockworkers, pointed out that the increasingly serious problem of unemployment in capitalist countries is mainly due to the armaments drive. To eliminate unemployment, he said, it is necessary to reform the social structure and strive for world peace. Further expansion of East-West trade will also help to reduce unemployment, he said. Referring to the effect of mechanization on dockers, Bridges pointed out that dockers should press management to shorten working hours and raise wages instead of creating unemployment. On mechanization in socialist countries, Bridges said that during his visit to Czechoslovakia last year, he found out that the question of unemployment did not exist in that country, and mechanization was welcomed by the workers and all the people.

(New China News Agency, Peking, May 11, 1959)

Bridges in addressing the Pacific and Asian Dockworkers Conference had urged Japan to accept the recent proposal of N.S. Khrushchev for a policy of neutrality and called for abolition of foreign military bases and an end to the presence of foreign troops in other countries.

(New China News Agency, Peking, May 13, 1959)

A Japanese newspaper reported that Harry Bridges warned that his International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union would refuse to load ships bound for Japan unless the Japanese Government corrected within a reasonable period what he described as "the backward and inhuman" working conditions of Japanese dockworkers. "It is a public disgrace that the governments of the United States of America, Japan, and Cambodia can continue to condone these conditions while pretending to accept and adhere to the minimum labor conditions provided for by ILO conventions," Bridges declared. Earlier in the day, Bridges, American west coast Longshoremen leader, denounced the 1951 Japanese peace treaty as a document that would make Japan "a base for the militarists who committed the horrible crime of Pearl Harbor." Bridges hailed the recent Tokyo District Court decision which declared that the presence of American forces in Japan was unconstitutional. He said he hoped the attempt to reverse it in the Supreme Court "will fail and fail miserably."

(Yomiuri, Tokyo, May 14, 1959)

Contacts with Communist trade union leaders abroad during 1959 made by Harry Bridges include the following:

January 1959, France

Louis Saillant, Secretary General of the World Federation of Trade Unions. Saillant claims not to be a Communist yet he has carried out Communist directives in WFTU since its inception.

Benoit Frachon, Vice President of the WFTU. Member of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of France.

Italy

Agustino Novella, President of WFTU. Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Italy.

USSR

Leonid Soloviev, Vice Chairman, All Union Central Council of Trade Unions - USSR.

May 1959, Tokyo

James Healey, Federal Secretary Waterside Workers of Australia. Member of the Communist Party of Australia.

Alexander Koetkin, Chairman of the Maritime and River Fleet Workers Trade Union of the USSR.